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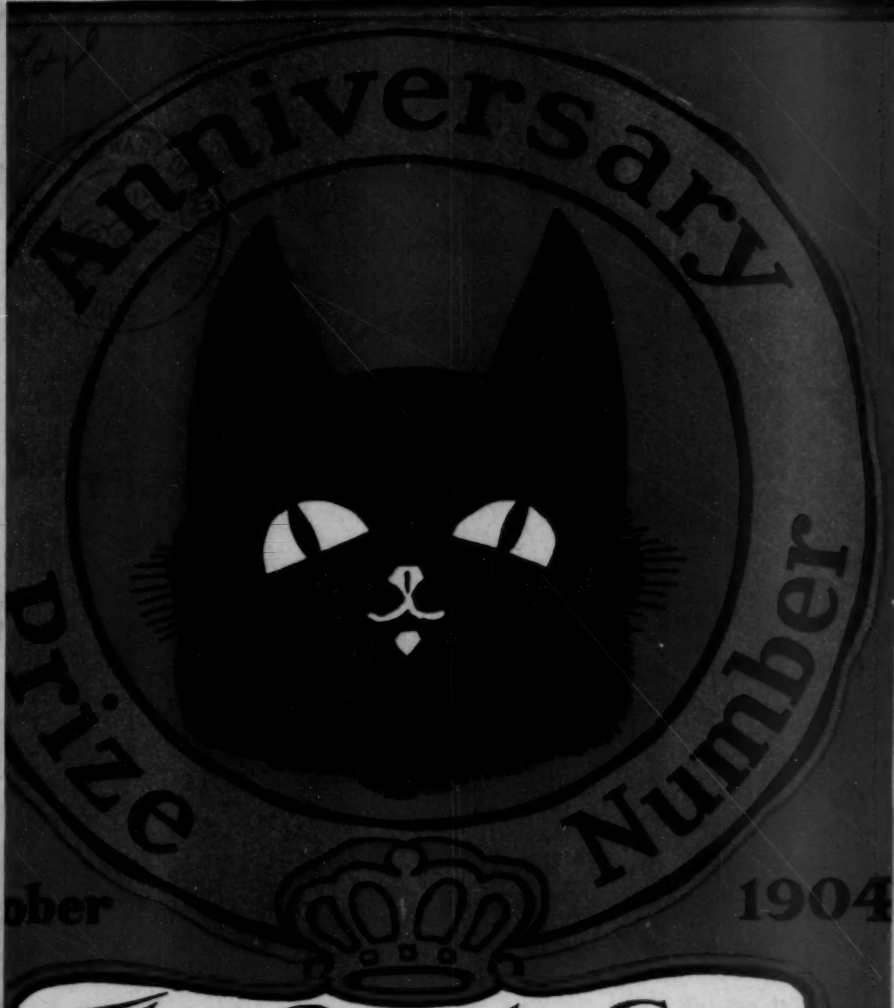

The Black Cat

A Few Bars in the Key of G.
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Unlucky Paul.
Marjorie R. Johnson.

A Labor Problem Solved.
W. B. Compton.

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Mary B. Mullett.

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A Few Bars in the Key of G.*

BY CLIFTON CARLISLE OSBORNE.

It WAS two o'clock, and time for the third watch on the night-herd. These two facts gradually impressed themselves on the consciousness of John Talbot Waring, as he was thumped into wakefulness by the Mexican "horse-wrangler." Disentangling himself from his damp blankets, he sat up and groped for his boots, meanwhile viewing with that strange satisfaction which misery finds in companionship, the rough pounding process which was being repeated upon the mummy-like figure by his side.

The dim light of the smoky lantern swinging from the ridge-pole of the dripping tent revealed the rolled-up forms of a dozen audibly slumbering cow-punchers, crowded together like sardines in a box; it also made visible an expression of disgust on the features of Mr. Waring, while failing completely to disclose the whereabouts of his missing boots. The sense of touch, however, presently located them lying in a little puddle near the

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tent flap, and their owner was immediately engrossed in the back-breaking task of forcing his swollen feet into the sodden leather.

"Seems to me, Jack, you ought to know enough to take your boots to bed with you," remarked his neighbor, "Slim" Caywood, as he complacently produced his own high-heeled pair from their dry nest. "That mornin' last week up on the Pass, when you had to do a war dance in the snow while they was thawin' out, don't seem to have learned you nothin'."

Waring paused in his struggle long enough to express, in a few well-chosen words, his opinions of boots in general, and his own wet ones in particular. This relief to his feelings seemed to endow him with renewed strength, for, after a few more violent contortions, he accomplished his purpose, and unrolling his "slicker," which had been serving temporarily as a pillow, enveloped himself in its clammy folds, and followed his tall fellow-victim of stern duty out into the drizzling rain.

There was a moon above the heavy clouds, but it might as well have been on the other side of the earth for all the assistance it gave in the operation of saddling two of the picketed horses. The herd lay to the north of the camp, and settling reluctantly into their soggy seats, the drowsy riders turned their horses in that direction, trusting to the instinct of the animals to find the cattle. The darkness was intense, and the wiry little beasts were obliged to pick their way cautiously over the rough ground lying between the camp and the spot where the herd had been "bedded down" for the night.

Presently the sound of a hoarse voice tunefully raised in a dismal minor melody came faintly to their ears, and as they neared the singer, they became aware that he was entreating the public to "take him to the graveyard, and place a sod o'er him," varying the monotony of this request by begging some one to "bury him not on the lone prairie." The effect of this mournful music was indescribably gruesome, and Waring found himself wondering with considerable impatience why cow-punchers invariably choose such gloomy themes for their songs, and then set them to the most funereal tunes imaginable.

Approaching carefully to avoid startling the cattle, the two riders separated, and relieving the tired watchers, commenced their

dreary three hours' vigil, on opposite sides of the herd. The cattle were unusually quiet, needing little attention, and Waring had ample opportunity to reflect on the disadvantages of a cow-puncher's life, as he rode slowly along the edge of the black mass of sleeping animals. The rain dripped from the limp brim of his sombrero, and ran in little streams from the skirts of his oil-skin coat into his already soaking boots. The chill wind, sweeping down from the mountains, pierced his damp clothes, and made him shiver in the saddle. For the hundredth time within a week, Waring condemned himself as an unutterable ass for relinquishing the comforts of civilization for this hard life among the rough and dangerous slopes of Colorado.

He recalled his arrival on the range six months before, a "tenderfoot," and the various tribulations he had endured incident to his transformation into a full-fledged cow-puncher. He remembered with a smile, the painful surprise occasioned by his first introduction to a pitching horse. Of the hardships and dangers which come to every rider of the range, he had experienced his share, and faced them bravely, thereby winning the respect of the rough, lion-hearted men among whom he had cast his lot.

But all the weary months had been wasted; he had failed in his object; he could not forget. He was not the first to learn that one cannot escape memory merely by crossing the continent. It even seemed to him that, instead of growing more endurable with time, the soreness in his heart and the sting of regret increased with every passing day. He wondered if She felt the separation; if she cared. As his thoughts wandered back over the past two years, he recalled every incident of their acquaintance as distinctly as though it had occurred but yesterday. The day he had first seen her, as she stepped gracefully out beside the piano to sing, at a musicale he had attended, — the song she had sung, —

> "The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,
> Are as a string of pearls to me."

the sweet days which followed, — their enjoyment together of symphony, oratorio, and opera, for both being amateurs of no mean ability, they had met (and loved) upon the common ground of their love of divine harmony.

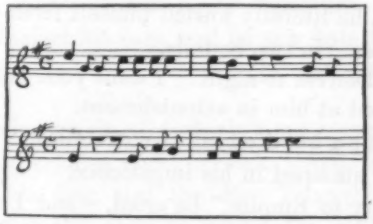
He looked into the blackness of the night, and could see her

as she appeared on that wonderful day when he had met her at the altar of Trinity Church, and spoken the words that were to bind them together through life. How beautiful she was, and how proud he had been of her as they walked down the broad aisle and out into the brilliant June sunshine, followed by the grand chords of Mendelssohn's masterpiece. He looked back at their wedding trip as at a beautiful dream. The noble mountains of New Hampshire seemed to have been created as a setting for their happiness; the great hotels only to cater to their pleasure. How well he remembered the return to the lovely home he had prepared for her, and the first dear days within its walls. How happy they had been, and how he had loved her! *Had* loved her? He *did* love her. That was his sorrow. He realized that as long as he had life, his whole heart would be hers.

And then the shadow had come over their home. He asked himself bitterly why he had not been more patient with her, and made allowances for her high spirit and quick temper. She was such a child. He could see now that he had been to blame many times in their quarrels, when at the time he had sincerely believed himself in the right. Should he go back to her, and admit that he had been wrong? Never! The memory of that last day was too clear in his mind. The words she had spoken in the heat of her anger had burned themselves into his soul, and could not be forgotten. Waring straightened in the saddle, and the hot blood rushed to his face. He wondered now that he had been able to answer her so calmly. He recalled every word he had said:

"Your words convince me that we cannot live together any longer. I will neither forget nor forgive them. I am going away. You are at liberty to sue for a divorce, if you care to do so. Three years, I believe, is the time required to substantiate a plea of desertion." That was all. Without another word he had left her, standing white and motionless in the centre of her dainty chamber, and gone from the beautiful home in white-hot rage, to come out here to the wildest spot he could find, and plunge into the perilous life he was leading, in the vain effort to forget.

He pulled down the dripping brim of his sombrero to shelter his face from the stinging wind, and resolutely turned his

thoughts in other directions. He speculated vaguely on the condition of his considerable property, and wondered indifferently how his agents were managing it. His friends at the clubs, — did they miss him? From them his thoughts strayed to the strange postal card he had received the day previous, and he began to puzzle his brain in the effort to decide who had sent it, and what it could mean. It had been directed in care of his attorney, and forwarded by the lawyer to the remote mountain post-office where Waring received his mail. It was an ordinary postal card, its peculiarity consisting in the fact that the communication on the back was composed not of words, but music — four measures in the key of G. This was the message:

He had hummed the notes over and over, and though they had a strangely familiar sound, yet he could not place the fragment, nor even determine the composer. His failure to decipher the enigma annoyed him. It had a meaning, of that he was convinced, but what could it be? Who could have sent it? Among his friends were many musicians, any one of whom might have adopted such a method of communicating with him. He began to hum the phrase, as he rode round and round the cattle.

The wind was dying out, and the rain had ceased. On the eastern mountain tops a faint rose tint was dimly visible; another hour of monotonous watching, and then for a hot breakfast beside the camp-fire. Waring, abandoning the riddle of the postal, began to sing to pass the time, and his rich baritone rang out above the sleeping herd. The light stole slowly over the peaks, and chased the shadows from the plain. The camp awoke, and the men crawled shivering from the tent. The cook's fire whirled showers of sparks aloft. One by one the cattle stirred, rose, and

commenced to graze. Waring still sang, carelessly passing from snatches of opera to lines of sacred harmony.

Suddenly, while in the midst of a passage from one of the great works of a master composer, he stopped short in surprise. *He was singing the notes on the card!* It had come to him like a flash. He tore open his coat and drew the postal from an inner pocket. There was no mistake. He had solved the mystery. Almost mechanically he reached for a pencil, and wrote the words under the lines of music, added a signature, and gazed long and earnestly, his face a perfect kaleidoscope of changing expressions; then, with a wild shout, he wheeled his horse and rode furiously to the camp.

Pulling up with a jerk that almost lifted the iron-jawed bronco from the ground, he literally hurled himself from the saddle, and reached the "Boss" in two bounds.

"I must be in Denver to-night! I want your best horse, quick!"

The Boss stared at him in astonishment.

"Why man, it's a hundred an' twenty miles. You're crazy."

Waring fairly stamped in his impatience.

"It's only sixty to Empire," he cried, "and I can get the train there. It leaves at one o'clock, and I can make it, if you'll lend me Star. I know he's your pet horse, and you never let any one ride him, but I tell you, Mr. Coberly, this means everything to me. I simply *must* get there."

Coberly scowled.

"You ought 'o know, Jack, that I won't lend Star; so what's the use o' askin'? None o' the other horses can get you over there in that time, so you might 's well give it up. What in thunder's the matter with you that you're in such a confounded rush?"

Waring thought a moment, and then, drawing the Boss beyond earshot of the listening cow-punchers, spoke to him rapidly and earnestly, finally handing him the postal card. Coberly scanned it intently, and a change came over his face. When he looked up, it was with an expression of respect mingled with amazement, as he said:

"Why didn't you show me this at first? O' course you can have the horse. Hi there! Some o' you boys round up the horses an' rope Star for Mr. Waring. Jump lively."

The men made a rush for their saddles and, in an incredibly short time, several of them were racing across the plain in the direction of the bunch of horses. Waring dove into the tent and began gathering his few possessions. Coberly plunged around outside, giving orders at the top of his voice.

"Roll up some grub for Mr. Waring quick! Nick, you get his canteen an' fill it out o' my jug. Fly around now!"

A rush of hoofs announced the arrival of the horse and his escort, just as Waring emerged from the tent with his little bundle. A dozen hands made quick work of saddling, and with a hurried good-bye all around, he swung himself up and astride of the magnificent animal, and was off on his long ride. He looked back and saw the boys in a group around the Boss, who was explaining the cause of his hasty departure. Presently a tremendous yell reached his ears, and he saw hats frantically thrown in the air. He waved his hand in reply, and settled down in the saddle.

The long, pacing stride of Coberly's pet covered the ground in a surprising manner, and eight o'clock found twenty-three miles behind his nimble feet, and the Bar Triangle Ranch in sight. A five-minute stop, and then on across the gently rising country to the stage station at the foot of the great Continental Divide, fifteen miles away. It lacked twenty minutes of ten o'clock when Waring drew rein in the shadow of the giant peaks that towered above him. He unsaddled and turned the big thoroughbred into the corral. A half-hour's rest would put new life into him. Twenty-two miles to the railroad, and nearly three hours in which to cover it. It seemed possible; but the great range must be crossed, and Waring knew that the ten miles of steep climbing to the snowy summit of Berthoud Pass meant more than twice that distance on the flat plain.

At quarter past ten, Star, refreshed by an energetic rubbing and a mouthful of water, was carrying him up the road, with no apparent diminution of power. Up, up they went, mile after mile, until the plain they had left was spread out like a map behind him, and the thick forest had given place to a scattering and scrubby growth of pines. They were nearing timber-line, and the piercing chill of the biting wind testified to the proximity of

the snow-covered peaks. Two miles from the top Waring dismounted, and led his panting horse along the icy trail. The rarified air seemed to burn his lungs as he struggled up the remaining distance to the summit of the Pass, twelve thousand feet above the sea.

Twelve o'clock! He stopped, and anxiously examined the noble beast that had carried him so far and so well. The inspection reassured him. There was plenty of life and energy left in Star yet. Not without reason was he acknowledged the best horse in the county. One hour, and twelve miles to go, the first seven down the steepest road in the State. Could he make it? He must! A final pull at the cinches, and Waring was again in the saddle, racing down the dangerous path towards the sea of dark green forest that stretched far below.

Down sharp pitches and long slopes, around dizzy curves and through deep cañons, slipping, swaying, followed by masses of loose stones and gravel, they went, faster than ever that trail was covered before. The iron-shod hoofs struck fire from the flinty rocks, as, almost sitting on his haunches, Star would slide twenty feet at a time down an unusually steep grade, recovering his footing with a staggering effort at the bottom. It was perilous work. They reached the timber-line, passed below it, and plunged into the woods. A mile beyond, they flew past the stage at a mad pace, throwing a shower of mud over the astonished passengers.

Down at last to the level road they came, with five miles still to go. Star swung into a strong, easy lope, and his rider drew a long breath. Not till then had he realized the strain of that wild ride. Rounding a turn in the road, he espied a horseman approaching, and turned out to pass him. The stranger eyed him sharply as he drew near, and suddenly whipped out a six-shooter.

"Hold up there. I want to talk to you."

For a moment Waring considered the chance of riding over the man, but for a moment only. The stranger looked too determined, and his aim was sure. He pulled up, raging.

"I suppose you want my money," he snarled. "Well, you're welcome to it if you'll leave me enough to pay my fare to Denver."

The other grinned.

"That's a good bluff, but it won't go. I'm the sheriff, an' what

I want to know is where you're going with Joe Coberly's horse."

"Oh, is that all you want?" said Waring, relieved. "Why, I've been working for Coberly, and he lent me the horse to ride over here to catch the train." And he gathered his reins to ride on.

"Hold on, young man," and the sheriff raised his gun suggestively, "that yarn won't do. I know old Joe, an' I happen to know that he wouldn't lend that horse to his own brother, let alone one of his cow-punchers. I guess I'll have to lock you up till the boys come over after you."

Waring groaned.

"Look here, Mr. Sheriff, I'm telling you God's truth. Coberly let me take the horse because it was the only one that could get me over here in time to catch the train, and I had to be in Denver to-night without fail."

His captor shook his head.

"It's no use, my friend; your story won't hold water. Why're you in such a tearin' hurry, anyway?"

Waring remembered the postal card; he reached into his breast pocket and produced it.

"That is my reason for haste," he said, "and that is why Coberly let me take the horse," and he added a few words of explanation.

Keeping his captive carefully covered with the muzzle of the revolver he carried, the officer rode closer and took the card. As he read it, his face lighted up, and he lowered his gun.

"That's all right, youngster. I'm sorry I stopped you. I don't wonder Joe lent you the horse; I'd 've done the same, even if I'd had to walk myself. I hope you won't miss the train. I'll ride down to the station with you, as some of the boys might want to string you up on account o' the horse — everybody knows him."

Overjoyed at this satisfactory turn of affairs, Waring touched Star with the spur and rode forward, with the repentant sheriff by his side, their horses in a rapid gallop. Mounting a rise, they saw the town before them, a mile distant. *The train was at the station!* Another touch of the spur, and Star stretched out into a run that gradually left the sheriff behind, well mounted though

he was. A half mile yet to go! — A quarter! — The black smoke began to come in heavy puffs from the funnel of the engine, and the line of cars moved slowly away from the station. Then it was that Star showed the spirit that was in him. The quirt fell sharply on his flank for the first time that day, and he bounded forward and swept down upon the town like a whirlwind.

As the usual crowd of train-time loafers lounged around the corner of the station, their attention was attracted by the two swiftly approaching riders, and they paused to watch the race. Presently one cried:

"Hullo, that first horse is Coberly's black, an' he's sure movin' too. The other chap ain't in it. Why, it's the sheriff! An' he's after the other feller. Horse thief, by thunder! I'll fix him," and he reached for his hip.

The others took up the cry of "Horse thief!" and as Waring flashed past the building at Star's top speed, a volley of shots greeted him, and the bullets sang around his head. Fortunately, they went wild, and before any more could be fired, the sheriff tore into the crowd and roared:

"Stop shootin', you fools. The man's all right; he's only tryin' to catch the train." At this there was a laugh, and then a rush to the track, where an unobstructed view of the race could be obtained.

The road ran for a mile beside the rails, as level as a floor. The train was gathering speed with every revolution of the wheels, but Star was travelling too, and gaining at every jump. The crowd at the station danced and howled in their excitement.

"Will he make it?"

"He's gainin'."

"Look at that horse hump himself."

"Gee, he's movin'!"

"Hooray for the black!"

"He'll make it!!

"He'll make it!!!"

Waring, with eyes fixed and jaw set, was riding desperately.

Thirty feet! — The spectators in the doorway of the last car gazed breathlessly. Twenty feet — and Star straining every nerve and muscle in his body. Ten feet — and still he gained.

Only five feet now! Inch by inch he crawled up. He was abreast of the platform!! Swerving his flying horse closer to the track, Waring leaned over, and grasping the railings with both hands, lifted himself from the saddle, kicked his feet from the stirrups, and swung over to the steps of the car. The faint sound of a cheer reached him from the distant depot.

After calmly accepting the enthusiastic congratulations of the passengers who had witnessed his dramatic boarding of the train, Waring dropped into a seat with a sigh of relief, and was soon lost in thought. He was roused from his revery by a touch on the arm, and turned to find the conductor standing beside him. The sight of that official reminded him of the necessity of paying fare, and he reached into his pocket for the required cash. His fingers encountered nothing more valuable than a knife and some matches. The other pockets were equally unproductive. Then he remembered, with a shock, that he had put his money in the little bundle, at that moment firmly attached to his saddle, some miles to the rear.

It was maddening. There was nothing to do but throw himself on the mercy of the man in the blue uniform. That person heard his excuses with an impassive face, and merely announced that he would have to get off at the next station. This was not at all in accordance with Waring's plans, and he endeavored to impress upon the conductor the importance of his being in Denver that evening. He might as well have addressed the Sphinx, so far as any effect his words had on the official, who said in answer to his entreaties:

"I 'd lose my job if I let you ride free. You'll have to get off. It's only ten miles back to Empire, and if you left your money on your saddle, you can soon get it again, that is, if no one has swiped it before you get there."

Waring grew desperate. Was his ride after all to be fruitless? He remembered his reason for haste, and decided to take the conductor into his confidence. Leaning over, he whispered something quickly into his ear, and ended by showing him the postal card. At first the man looked incredulous, but a glance at Waring's earnest face reassured him. His expression softened, and he handed back the card with a sigh.

"I reckon I'll have to fix it for you, but the only way I can do it is to pay your fare out of my own pocket. I'll do that, and you can send me the money. It's three-sixty."

He took a slip from his pocket, upon which he wrote his name and address. This he gave to Waring, together with a cash receipt ticket, and, unheeding the latter's impulsive thanks, continued on his round of collection.

This occurrence reminded Waring of similar difficulties to be overcome in Denver, and he did some hard, rapid thinking as he was being whirled down through Clear Creek Cañon, but by the time the train shot past Table Mountain and out to the plain, his face bore a confident smile. The postal card had served him well thus far; perhaps its mission was not yet ended.

The car wheels were still turning when he strode through the big station, his heavy spurs ringing on the marble floor. Jumping into a carriage, he was driven to the nearest drug store, where he consulted a directory.

"Number nine hundred South Seventeenth Street," he cried, as he re-entered the vehicle. Arriving at his destination, he sprang out and, saying "Wait," ran up the steps of a palatial residence.

To the dignified butler who opened the door, he said: "I wish to see Mr. Foster. My name is Waring. I haven't a card with me."

Instinctively perceiving the gentleman beneath the rough flannel shirt and mud-covered "chaps," the servant politely ushered him into the reception room, saying that he would see if Mr. Foster was in. Apparently he was, for he appeared almost immediately, the personification of keen-eyed, well-groomed finance.

"What can I do for you, Mr. — er — Waring?"

That young man took in every detail of his appearance, and he realized that he had a hard-headed man of business to deal with.

"Mr. Foster," he said, "you are the president of the Denver National Bank, which, I believe, handles the Western interests of the Second National Bank of Boston?"

The other bowed, and Waring continued:

"I have an account at the Second, and I want you to cash a check for me. It is after banking hours I know, and even if it were not, I have no immediate means of identification."

The banker's features stiffened perceptibly, but Waring went on:

"It is of the greatest importance that I take the eastern express to-night, or I would not come to you in this irregular way —"

"One moment, Mr. Waring. Pardon me for interrupting you, but it will save your time as well as my own if I say that what you ask is impossible, as you should know. My advice to you is to wire your bank for the money."

Waring broke in impatiently:

"Of course I know that I can do that, but it means a day's delay, and that is what I want to avoid. See here, Mr. Foster, I am willing to pay any amount within reason for the accommodation if you will oblige me."

The president began to look suspicious.

"It must be a very urgent matter that requires such haste," he said sarcastically. "Really, Mr. Waring, I must positively decline to do anything for you."

"It *is* an urgent matter," cried Waring. "I was about to explain it to you," and he went on and told of the postal card and its purport, adding a brief account of his efforts to get to the city in time to take the train that night.

"Let me see the card," said the banker. His voice had taken on a different inflection. Waring handed him the bit of pasteboard that had played such an important part in his adventures. Mr. Foster scrutinized it.

"From what is it taken, did you say?" Upon hearing the answer he left the room, to return in a few minutes with a rather bulky musical score, which he laid upon the table, and turned the pages until he found what he sought. Carefully he compared the music on the card with that of the printed sheet. Then, turning to the younger man, he said in a kindly voice:

"I will assist you, Mr. Waring. It will, of course, be a purely personal accommodation, as it is contrary to all my business methods, but I cannot resist such an appeal as this. Also, I consider myself a good judge of faces, and I feel safe in trusting yours. What amount do you require?"

Waring fairly beamed with joy.

"A hundred dollars will be sufficient," he replied.

The banker motioned towards a desk.

"Make your check for a hundred and fifty. You will need that much, unless you care to travel in your present costume."

Waring made out the proper form, and handed it to the banker. The latter dropped into the vacated chair before the desk, and rapidly wrote a check for a like amount, which he passed over, saying:

"You can cash this at the Brown Palace Hotel. I will 'phone the cashier, so you will have no trouble."

Waring tried to thank him, but he would not listen.

"You are perfectly welcome, my boy. I am glad to be able to help you. I envy you, with all my heart. I would give half of all I own to be in your position," and his voice trembled a little. "You have my best wishes for a pleasant journey. Good-bye." A cordial hand grasp, and Waring ran down the steps with a light heart, his way at last clear before him.

"Telegraph office," he shouted. Ten minutes later, these words were speeding over the wire:

"Postal received. Arrive Boston Friday night. See Luke i. 13. — Jack."

When the Chicago Limited pulled out of Denver that evening, John Talbot Waring, clean shaved, and attired in garments of the most approved cut, was standing on the rear platform of the last Pullman, softly humming a fragment from the great oratorio, "The Messiah." There was a tender light in his eyes as he gazed at a postal card he held in his hand.

And the words he sang were:

For unto us a child is born;
Unto us a son is given.

At the same moment, two thousand miles away in the East, a pale young wife was holding a telegram close to her lips. An open Bible lay on the bed beside her. Turning softly on her pillows, she glanced lovingly at the dainty cradle, and whispered:

Thou shalt call his name John.

Unlucky Paul.*

BY MARJORIE R. JOHNSON.

UP to about five years ago Paul Preston was a lucky man, having everything in life that he wanted to make him happy, and nothing to worry him. He was young and healthy, standing five feet eleven in his stockings, was not in love, and, best of all, he thought, had not a cent in the world and no head for business.

His ill-luck began when his great-uncle Morrison died and saddled the burden of his millions upon him. He had not expected this, and fumed and fretted, vowing he would never bear it. He had just taken passage for Europe in the steerage of a cattle steamer sailing from Quebec, had had a hard time to raise the money for even that, and now, in the very height of his triumph at having accomplished the acme of his ambition, down came that crushing inheritance, and life lost its roseate hue and became black.

Reluctantly he gave up thoughts of the steerage, and secured a deck cabin on the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* from New York, but all the way over, while outwardly enjoying himself and making himself agreeable to the ladies, he was planning how to get rid of his monetary incubus.

In Paris he gave everybody the slip and went straight to the Latin Quarter. There he took an attic, fitted it up with second-hand furniture, had a "mean pallet" for a bed, a tumbledown easel, some scarecrow chairs and other shabby things, and then settled down to work with strong hope of some degree of happiness. He asked the boys about the cheapest restaurants and was soon going it with the most poverty-stricken of the lot, having a good time and almost succeeding in forgetting his money when, one unlucky day, his lawyer tracked him out, and secrecy was no

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longer possible. His comrades of the Quarter distrusted him after that, and turned the cold shoulder, and there was nothing to do but quit Paris.

In Munich, whither he went, he didn't go it quite so strong, taking a fairly decent apartment, working or not as he liked, spending and losing all the money he could without arousing suspicion. Working as he did, by fits and starts, it required no management to acquire a reputation for laziness, and he soon had the happiness of learning that he was spoken of as a ne'er-do-weel who would never make his mark. This encouraged him to believe that he could safely exhibit with a good prospect of being skied, and finding no sale for his work. What, then, was his dismay on going into the Gallery to see his picture hung on the line, with an admiring crowd before it, and to receive the next day an offer of sixteen thousand marks for it. He had to accept, of course, or be found out, but it convinced him that Munich was, for his purposes, worse than Paris.

Next he tried St. Petersburg, thinking that if there were such a thing as getting into a scrape, Russia was the country for the purpose. Here he did all the reckless things he could think of, any one of which would have resulted in the banishment to Siberia of an ordinarily lucky individual, but he never succeeded in exciting even a faint suspicion of Nihilism. Before he had been in the city a month he found himself being sought out by personages in the court circle and treated as if he had been a prince in disguise. This enabled him to try an experiment which, although he decidedly objected to it, he had wished to try for some time. The thought occurred to him that, had he been a gambler, he might have got rid of any amount of money in a very short time. He had heard and read of fortunes being lost in a single night, and, though it was much against his inclination, he tried the thing with a party of professional gamblers — swells, all of them — but professional gamblers all the same.

Of course, he knew that he should win the first night or two — in stories tyros always do — and he didn't mind it for awhile ; but when it kept on night after night for a month, and he found that he had more than doubled the amounts he had at stake, he thought it was high time to throw up the undertaking.

Discouraged and disgusted, he went to London, where he frequented the East End with large sums of money in his pockets; visited the places of popular amusement with bulging pocket-books, ill-concealed, in the hope of thus losing at least a few thousand pounds. Either the police were unusually on the alert or the pick-pockets had all experienced a change of heart, for never a penny could he lose.

Then he returned to New York and tried investments. Knowing that he had no head for business, he reckoned this lack the strongest asset in his new plan. Whenever he heard of a particularly unpromising wildcat scheme, he would take a few thousand shares in it, — with liability if possible, — thinking this about the surest way to secure a good, healthy loss. Not a loss could he make, for, as sure as he took shares in the fishiest-looking of all mining or other schemes, the thing would flare up into the biggest boom it had ever had, and Preston's money would be trebled before he could get rid of his stock.

It seemed to him awful.

Then he settled large sums on all his relatives, and had serious thoughts of getting rid of the whole fortune in that way, when again his Nemesis, in the shape of his lawyer, came down on him, telling him that, by the terms of old Morrison's will, he was prohibited from disposing of more than a certain proportion of his capital during his lifetime. Then the brilliant, quite unbusiness-like idea occurred to him to contest his great-uncle's will. But as his relatives — who had carefully read the will even before he had, and found that in case of a contest the whole fortune would go to charity — begged him not to do so, as they would thereby have to disgorge what he had already conveyed to them, — he felt compelled, for their sakes, to desist. If only he had had the good fortune to think of this plan at first! But, hang it all, that was just his luck!

About this time, his case looking really desperate, some malicious spirit suggested to him to marry a poor girl — one who had never had two cents to her name, and who would have her head so turned when she learned of the wealth that was at her disposal, that she might be trusted to get rid of it in short order by the abnormal extravagance which she would naturally develop. Here

was a promising scheme, and he wondered he had not thought of it before. He went to work warily, however, for, of course, while he wanted a *poor* girl, he did not wish a *common* one, with no genius for extravagance — and the right one was hard to find at first.

Happening to mention to his old nurse his desire to marry a poor but pretty girl, she entered into the plan with much alacrity and promised to find "*the* very one." Laughingly telling her that the most prominent characteristic of the fair one must be an undeniable tendency to extravagance, and an empty purse her only dower, he awaited events.

At a summons from the old lady he called at her rooms, and there was a slim little thing with her, dressed in a shabby gown, who sat and knit away at a coarse stocking and never raised her eyes or said a word all the time he was there. He went away a delighted man for, in spite of an unusual refinement of face and attitude, it was evident the girl had not a cent in the world but what she could earn by knitting.

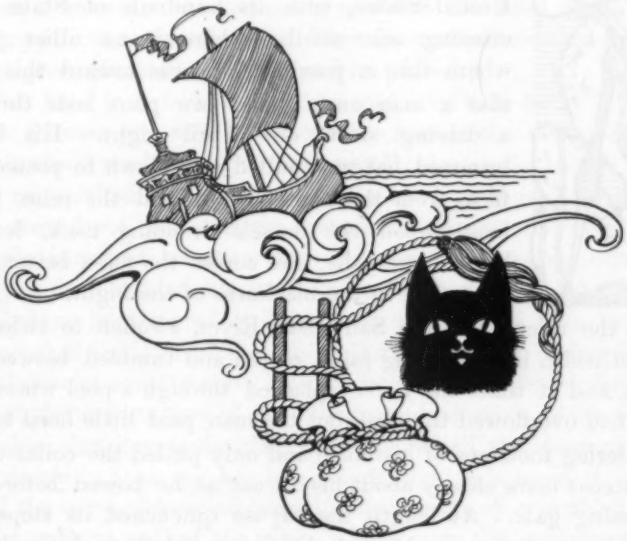
The next time he met her she wore a plain black dress. He saw her often after that and by degrees he overcame her extreme shyness and she conversed with him in a way that soon set his pulses tingling.

At the end of two or three months he was dead in love with the girl. He had not intended this, but was not going to let such a small consideration break up the plan, which was progressing so finely. It took nearly another month to persuade her to marry, but she finally consented.

The wedding day arrived. Paul was terribly nervous, having preceded the bride by at least ten minutes, and was beginning to have an awful fear that she might have played him false. He had discovered by this time that she was the one girl in all the world for him, and as he contemplated with anguish the prospect of losing her, a lovely vision appeared. He could hardly believe his eyes. Of all the costly looking brides he had ever seen, she was the costliest, and yet the plainest in her apparel. Was that magnificent, white-robed, queenly woman the little girl who had been wont to sit in her poor black frock, knitting industriously in Nurse's little living-room?

The next day, on the train, when he casually dropped a package of thousand-dollar notes into her lap, with the remark that it was pin money, and when it was spent she should have more, she remarked in the quietest little drawl imaginable:

"Oh, Paul! I must tell you a little secret! When poor Aunt Matilda died in California a week ago she left me two millions!"



Where the Lines Meet.*

BY FRANK X. FINNEGAN.

THERE is a spot in the southwestern part of this country where a man may stand at one moment upon the soil of two States and two Territories; where, if he moves but a step in either direction, he may be entirely within the boundaries of one commonwealth, with another lying beneath his eyes and the two Territories so close that his shadow, cast by the noonday sun, may fall on both of them. In all the broad expanse of the United States, with its hundreds of State lines crossing one another, there is no other place where this is possible. It was toward this spot that a man on a jaded cow pony rode through a driving storm one April night. His broad brimmed hat was pulled well down to protect his face from the beating rain and the reins hung loose upon the horse's drooping neck, for the cayuse knew the trail across the mesa better than its master in the blackness of the night.

To the rider's left the San Juan River, swollen to twice its normal width by the spring rains, roared and tumbled between its banks, and at times the horse splashed through a pool where the river had overflowed the trail, but the man paid little heed to the floundering footsteps of his horse and only pulled the collar of his rough coat more closely about his throat as he bowed before the increasing gale. At length the cayuse quickened its steps and raised its head as a twinkling light glimmered through the blackness far ahead. The man roused himself in sympathy with the livelier motion of his horse, the light caught his eye and with an oath he brought his rawhide quirt down on the horse's flank as he stared through the darkness.

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The surprised cayuse bounded forward with renewed energy and in a few minutes stopped before a rough shack, through the window of which the light was gleaming. The man threw himself from the horse, bounded to the door and flung it open. In the single room of the cabin he saw a heavily built, forbidding-looking man seated near a table, smoking and vainly trying by the light of the smoky lamp to read a soiled fragment of a month-old newspaper. He looked up when the door was burst open and surveyed the intruder calmly.

"Hello, Bill," he said after a moment, during which the two men had stared at each other; "I was waitin' for you."

"I see you was," said the man at the door, "an' you seem to be makin' yourself at home while you're waitin'." In his astonishment he had forgotten his horse and he took a step inside the shack as if to escape the drenching rain and the wind which was roaring up from the southwest. Then he remembered that he had not yet given the animal shelter and he paused.

"Wait till I put the horse up," he said. "I'll be back."

"Oh, I know you will, Bill," said the man at the table, lightly. "I ain't afraid you're goin' to run away."

The rain-soaked man at the door hesitated as though to speak again, started out, turned again toward the man at the table, who smilingly surveyed his every move, and at last stepped outside, closed the door and led his tired horse to the lean-to behind the shack, where he tethered it for the night. By the time he had again reached the door of the cabin his features had undergone a decided change and the surly look of defiance with which he had first met the smiling face of the other man had given place to an expression almost equally cheerful. He closed the door of the shack carefully that the howling wind might not burst it open, crossed the room and seated himself on the edge of a tumbled bed near the western wall of the cabin. Watching the man near the table with a furtive smile he fished a blackened pipe from his pocket, rapped it on the edge of the bed, blew into it, and said:

"If you don't mind bein' obligin', I'd just as soon have a pipeful of that tobacco you're smokin'."

"Sure," said the man at the table, drawing out a greasy pouch. "Come an' take all you want."

The man on the bed eyed him narrowly a moment, knocked his pipe against his horny palm once or twice, and said:

"I'd rather you'd toss it over."

"What's the odds?" asked the man at the table, lightly, but he tossed the pouch over and his companion filled and lighted his pipe. When the blue clouds were adding their mite to the closeness of the atmosphere, the man at the table turned sharply to the man on the bed.

"Bill," he said, "I don't s'pose it'll take much talk from me to explain what I'm here for. I been lookin' for you for a month all over Montezuma County, an' I said to the boys I wouldn't come back without you. I sort of lost track of you for a spell until a cow puncher up near M'Elmo told me you had built this shack down here near the San Juan an' I come right on here to get you. Not findin' you at home, I made myself comfortable, knowin' you'd come sooner or later. Do you want me to tell you what I come for?"

"Sure," said Bill. "I know I never sent for you, Tom M'Kinney, an' I'd get along here powerful comfortable for a long time if you didn't make it no point to drop in on me."

"Well, maybe so," admitted M'Kinney, slowly; "but you see, Bill, my comin' ain't what the folks back in the States refer to as a social call. It's more connected with business, you know, Bill, seein' as how I've got in my pocket a warrant for the arrest of one Bill Gordon for the crime of horse stealin', contrary to the peace an' order of Montezuma County, Colorado. I reckon you won't deny that you're Bill Gordon, leastways not to me, that has knowed you for twelve years, an' I don't expect you're goin' to cut up rough about it, because you've knowed me the same length of time."

Bill Gordon smoked thoughtfully a few moments, with the shadow of a smile on his features.

"No, Tom," he said at length, "I ain't goin' to deny that I'm Bill Gordon, but I'm sorry that you've come all this way in such bad weather just to tell me that, because you'll have to leave your warrant in your pocket an' go back without me."

The smile vanished from M'Kinney's face, giving way to a fierce glare which no whit dismayed the complacent Bill Gordon.

"I'll have to go back without you?" repeated M'Kinney. "Don't you reco'nize me as the sheriff of Montezuma County, State of Colorado?"

"Surely," said Gordon calmly, blowing a big cloud of smoke into the air.

"Then I place you under arrest," thundered M'Kinney, rising with a hand upon the butt of his revolver as though in expectation of resistance.

Bill Gordon still continued to sit on the edge of the bed and smoke and he even smiled at the warlike move of the sheriff.

"No, you don't place me under no arrest, neither," he finally declared, looking fearlessly into the sheriff's eyes.

"Why don't I?" asked the surprised M'Kinney. Resistance he was ready for, but this calm and unmoved refusal of Bill Gordon to be arrested staggered him.

"Because," answered Gordon, with a final smile of triumph, "I ain't in Colorado!"

"You ain't *what?*" thundered the sheriff.

"I ain't in Colorado," repeated Gordon, with the same calm smile of assurance. "You are," he went on hastily, seeing that M'Kinney evidently thought he was insane, "but I ain't. You see, the line runs right through my shack. Bed's in Utah, chair is in Colorado. That nail keg over there is in Arizony and that old saddle in the other corner's in New Mexico. I'm on the bed, so I'm in Utah an' you can't serve no warrant in Utah, Tom. You'll admit that?"

"Sure, I admit that," said Sheriff M'Kinney in a dazed and uncertain way.

"Well, then," continued the imperturbable Gordon, "your warrant ain't no good. All I've got to do is to stay over here in Utah an' you can't touch me."

"But — but how'd you know where the line was?" demanded the sheriff suspiciously. He had recovered from the first shock of surprise and was preparing for fight again. "How do I know this ain't a game you're puttin' up on me? I'd make a fine figure goin' back to M'Elmo with a yarn like that, wouldn't I? I'd be run out of town before I could resign."

"Lemme tell you about it," said Gordon, stretching himself

comfortably on the bed. He was no longer in fear of the sheriff's warrant and was eager to expatiate upon his great scheme. "I seen it all set out in a newspaper about a month ago about this here place. I was up to Monticello, up here on the Utah side, you know, an' I found a newspaper kickin' around there what had all this in it. It told how the State lines of Colorado an' Utah an' Arizony an' New Mexico all come together in a bunch an' how four cowboys could sit on their horses an' hold hands an' all be in different States. An' it went on about how the cowboys had built up a pile of stones to mark the spot where all the four lines come together an' it had a picture of the pile of stones an' four men on horses all holdin' hands."

Bill paused to refill his pipe from the pouch which still lay beside him and as he did so he was reminded of the incident of the evening.

"That's why I wanted you to toss me your tobacco," he said with a smile. "I didn't want to take a chance in Colorado for a minute."

"I wish I had knowed it then," grunted the sheriff. "I mightn't have been so obligin'."

"Well, I got to thinkin' about that thing," went on Gordon when the pipe was well alight, "an' I got to wonderin' if that wouldn't be a handy place to live. You know, lots of fellows build their shacks on the line between two States because they may not want to stay in one State all the time. There is occasions when many a man wants to move along a little an' if he can do it by movin' across the room it saves lots of travelin'. But, thinks I, s'posin' a fellow has two visitors at once that wants to have a little chat with him, one from each State? Then what? thinks I. An' it struck me that if a fellow could live in about four States — not more than four — it might often come handy."

"There ain't no manner of doubt," interrupted Sheriff M'Kinney, "that it would for you, Bill."

"I thought about that thing so much," went on Gordon, "that I came down here lookin' for that there pile of stones. An' I found 'em an' this here is the place. I built this shack around that pile of stones just as square as them fellows that lays out the railroad lines could make it. I took down the pile of stones

because they was in the way, but this is the place, Tom, an' you can take my word for it. The bed's in Utah, the chair's in Colorado, the keg's in Arizony an' the saddle over there's in New Mexico. When I want to leave Colorado for a spell I mosey over an' sit on the nail keg in Arizony an' I go to bed in Utah every night I'm at home. You can see for yourself, Tom," concluded Gordon with the utmost good-nature, "that the scheme ain't a bad one; as, for example, right at present."

"No, it ain't a bad one," assented the sheriff, "only there's this about it, Bill, you can't stay over there in Utah forever, you know. S'posin' I was to hang around here until you got hungry an' wanted to get up a snack o' sunthin' to eat for yourself, you'd have to come over into Colorado to eat it an' then I'd nab you. You can't live on the bed, you know. Did you think of that?"

"Sure," said Gordon, with a quiet smile. "You see this window? It's on the Utah side of the house. I can go out this window an' go around to the corral an' get my horse without ever leavin' Utah, an' I can ride from there up into Utah or down into Arizony or around the front of the house into New Mexico an' you can't lay a hand on me, Tom. I can keep in one o' them places, you know, until you get tired an' go home. Oh, I've got it all thought out."

The Colorado sheriff was silent for a few minutes, wrapped in deep thought on the perplexing problem with which he was face to face. The storm still raged with unabated fury, the rain beat upon the flimsy roof of the cabin and the wind roared around the door and windows. Bill Gordon smoked steadily and regarded the sheriff with satisfied amusement until both men were startled by a hail from without.

"Hello, the house!" called a stentorian voice above the storm. Bill Gordon looked uneasily at the sheriff.

"'Pears like there's somebody out there in the rain," said M'Kinney.

"I ain't lookin' for no visitors," answered Gordon. "This ain't no hotel."

The calls from without were repeated and finally succeeded by a sturdy rapping on the door of the shack. Gordon arose reluctantly, being careful not to cross the line passing through the

centre of the little cabin, and unfastened the door. In a gust of wind and rain two bedraggled men stepped inside. Coming out of the pitchy darkness of the stormy night, they were dazzled for a moment by the lamplight and peered around the shack with winking eyes. Gordon took advantage of the circumstance to slip over into the corner and seat himself on the nail keg.

"Hello, Tom," cried one of the newcomers in surprise as he made out the features of the Colorado sheriff in the lamplight; "what you doin' here? We expected to find Bill Gordon. You waitin' for him too?"

"There's Bill, in the corner," replied Sheriff M'Kinney, and the two strangers turned in the direction indicated. Gordon was rocking himself lightly to and fro on the nail keg, still enjoying his smoke and with the same inscrutable smile on his features with which he had regaled the Colorado sheriff before acquainting him with his novel scheme for evading the law.

"Evenin', Jack," he said as the two turned toward him; "evenin', Buck. What brings you folks this way? Nothin' goin' wrong, is there?"

"Well, I'll put up our horses while Jack tells you about it," said the man addressed as Buck, and he disappeared into the rain again. Jack looked rather awkwardly from one to the other of the men as though he did not exactly relish the situation in which he found himself.

"Before I say anything more," he began, addressing himself to Sheriff M'Kinney, "I want to know if Bill here is your prisoner. You got here first an', of course, if he's under arrest, he's yours, an' we ain't got anything more to say."

"Well, no," said Sheriff M'Kinney; "to tell the truth, he ain't my prisoner."

"Good," said the drenched newcomer; "then we ain't had our trip for nothin'."

At that moment the man who had gone out to care for the horses returned and Jack greeted him gleefully.

"It's all right, Buck," he said. "Sheriff M'Kinney says he hasn't arrested Bill; so one of us is sure to get him. You can take him if you want, because I know I can get him when you're through with him. Bill," he continued, turning to Gordon, who

was listening with the same bored smile on his face, "I've got a warrant for you for runnin' off Dad Walters' three colts and Buck here has got another warrant for you for a case down in his county. Now, we both been lookin' for you for a long time an' when we heard you was located in a shack down here, we decided to come after you together. Here you are an' here we are, an' I don't s'pose you're goin' to make any fuss about it, are you, Bill?"

"No, I ain't goin' to make any fuss about it," said Gordon, with a sly wink at Sheriff M'Kinney; "only I ain't goin' with any of you."

"You ain't?" repeated Jack fiercely, laying his hand upon a ponderous revolver. "We'll see about that!"

"Wait a minute, Jack," said Gordon in a soothing tone; "take it easy. You're sheriff of San Juan County, Utah, ain't you?"

"Certainly I am," replied Jack impatiently.

"An' Buck there is sheriff of San Juan County, New Mexico, ain't he?" went on Gordon.

"Oh, we all know that," said Buck, starting forward. "Let's stop this foolishness."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," warned Gordon, while M'Kinney industriously cleaned his pipe. "Now, neither one of you two sheriffs ever thought he had any right to serve warrants in Arizony, did you?"

"Arizona!" exclaimed Jack. "What are you talking about?"

"Only this," said Gordon, settling back against the wall, "that I'm in Arizony. Ask M'Kinney. He knows about it. Bed's in Utah, chair's in Colorado, keg's in Arizony and saddle's in New Mexico."

"What's all this about?" demanded the Utah sheriff, turning to the Colorado sheriff.

"I guess Bill's right," said Sheriff M'Kinney, "if he's tellin' the truth, an' I ain't got much reason to doubt that. We all know the State lines all cross down here somewheres an' Bill allows this is the spot. He found the pile of stones the fellows put up to mark it an' he built his shack around 'em. I guess he's got the best of it while he stays on the nail keg."

The two outwitted sheriffs glared at Gordon, at M'Kinney and at each other in turn, and in the silence the storm could be heard

roaring with redoubled fury. At length the New Mexico sheriff started impatiently.

"This is all nonsense," he said, sternly. "Here we are, three sheriffs, each with a warrant for this fellow. Any one of us can arrest him by main force. Are we all going to be bluffed by this yarn about the State lines?"

"You wouldn't want to do an illegal act like that, Buck," ventured Gordon, winningly. "Not you, Buck, in front of two witnesses. You know if you dragged me out of Arizony, where I'm sittin' so comfortable, an' took me away off into New Mexico, I could summons these two repertable officers to testify about it, Buck, an' they'd have to tell the truth, you know, about how you served your warrant outside your own State. It wouldn't do, you know, Buck," concluded Gordon, with exasperating impudence. The three sheriffs looked at one another in silence once more.

"No, I guess he's got us stalled," said Buck, at last, and Jack and M'Kinney solemnly shook their heads.

"I suppose we could stay here an' starve him out," suggested Jack. "He'd have to come out of Arizona some time."

"I want to get back when court opens to-morrow," said M'Kinney. "I've fooled away three weeks on this thing now."

"We might—" began Buck, when something happened. The howling blast struck the light shack with tremendous force, tore it from the earth and poised it on end for an instant, then hurled it to the north and east. The men fell in a heap with the table and the bed on top of them, but Sheriff M'Kinney had his eye on Gordon at the instant of the upheaval and had his hands on him as they all lay, half-stunned, in the wreckage.

"Bill," he breathed hoarsely into Gordon's ear, "we're in Colorado now. You're my prisoner!"

A Labor Problem Solved.*

BY W. B. COMPTON.

THE listless look faded from Tom Sutherland's eyes when the yellow-jacket flew in at the cabin window, for his interest in all things that walked, crawled, or flew had been aroused. An expression peculiar to the naturally observant man replaced the lines that had settled on his face.

The insect carried something that was spherical in shape, like a spider deprived of its legs. It flew aimlessly around the room, and then in a straight line against the wall, so swiftly that Sutherland heard the impact.

He hastened to pick up the object of his curiosity, which had fallen to the floor, and found it to be a pellet of clay about the size of a small pea. It was moist; and, crushing it in the palm of his hand, he was astonished at what he discovered.

The yellow-jacket he watched until it disappeared over an inaccessible cliff, where a tiny stream of water trickled down. He then returned to inspect the interior of the cabin, and found that it was lined with the mud masonry of the yellow-jackets.

Each nest was about two inches long, an inch wide, and a quarter of an inch thick. He knocked them all down, subjected them to a test, and found that his suspicions were confirmed.

Sutherland had made a discovery, but he had no money with which to exploit his find. The expenditure for labor would be large, while the returns, he admitted, would be uncertain.

While weighing the matter in his mind, a sharp sting on the end of his nose roused him to the loud manifestations of the angry insects deprived of their homes. It gave him an idea, and he hastened to the cliff, where he found that it was correct.

When he returned, he cut some lumber into portable sections,

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more than enough to line the interior of his cabin. Then he equipped himself with a pole and large bucket, and visited all the old, abandoned cabins of the loggers whose axes had depleted the narrow valley of its giant redwood trees many years before. The cabins were all lined with the nests, which he gathered into his bucket, after taking the necessary precautions against the sting of the insects.

Upon his return to his own cabin, he found the army of little laborers he had pressed into his service returning with little pellets of clay, with which to construct new nests, and the portable sections were literally swarming with the busy little workers.

The harvest that he had garnered into his bucket from the other cabins he subjected to the same test as those from his own cabin, and was convinced of the feasibility of his scheme.

A few days later he again visited the other cabins, which he lined with his portable sections of thin boards, and found that no such thing as a "flying delegate" had disturbed the harmony or unity of purpose of The Most Ancient Order of Masons, who were unwittingly working in his interests.

It was with great satisfaction that he saw the little pellets of clay coming in by the thousands, as in the course of every few days he made the round of the cabins, and gathered in the harvest of the little winged workers that all that summer slaved for him.

Tom was in high spirits, and carried himself with the old self-reliant air that had nearly been lost in his late reverses. The salubrious climate of the pine-clad hills and sunny skies of California had bronzed his cheek and given health to his frame.

He was a graduate of Yale, and had given special attention to Sociology and Political Economy, but had been required by Elsie's father to show that he had something more than a theoretical knowledge, by solving a real labor problem, and to return in two years' time with substantial proofs of his executive ability. Then might he aspire to Elsie's hand in marriage, for only such a man would be competent to control the estate that would fall to her.

A unique opportunity had presented itself. Tom soliloquized about economics, and wondered what Elsie's father would say, if he knew of the thousands of toilers that Tom Sutherland had in his employ, whose only compensation was to live over winter,

in their own houses, built by themselves, and would be glad of the privilege of being alive in the "Good Old Summer Time" of the next year, when they would continue to labor for him, with never a thought of such a thing as a "walkout" or "flyout."

The tale of the bees that he would tell to Mr. Sternman, Tom thought, would surpass the tale of bricks without straw, and he believed that the Children of Israel were not to be compared with his little laborers, nor was Pharaoh to be compared with himself.

He felt that Mr. Sternman would concede that he had technically fulfilled all the requirements, and, upon presentation of the "substantial proof," would give his consent and blessing.

In fancy he could hear the old gentleman say: "Young man, you did well to study the bees. They are as fine a study in Sociology as you can find in the book of nature. For industry, thrift, and frugality, they cannot be surpassed. You should make it your endeavor to be a bee, but remember that you aim to be the king bee. By this I do not mean that you should be a drone, but that, with the least possible amount of effort on your part, you should get the greatest possible amount of results from the efforts of others. This you will find exemplified in the man of executive ability who is able to drive those around him, without performing labor himself. He is a valuable man."

It may have been egotistical in Tom to make the old gentleman talk in this manner, but Tom was human, and in love beside.

As winter approached, he realized that his army was liable to extinction if not allowed quarters during the cold weather, so he took down his portable sections of boards, and allowed the yellow-jackets to build permanent nests.

His last harvest gathered in, he placed it in a large pan, pulverized it with a wooden pestle he had made for the purpose, filled the pan with water, and stirred it round and round until it had taken up all the clay, and was poured off, leaving in the bottom of the pan a handful of bright, sparkling residue, which just filled the last of the buckskin sacks that the yellow-jackets had filled with a fortune in gold dust for him.

Dave Whittam's Confession.*

BY MARY B. MULLETT.

IT was almost four weeks since the close of the great midwinter revival, but the echoes thereof were still enlivening the town of Milton. Before the meetings had begun, Brother Billow had warned his hearers that they would be sorry if they failed to attend, and he had proved to be a good prophet. He had a powerful way of putting things. When he spoke, he stretched a long, lean neck over his desk and pointed a long, lean finger at his congregation. His remarks were jerky, as if his brain leaked hyphens and dashes.

"Re-gret," said Brother Billow, "will be your portion — perhaps — through all — eternity."

Whether its lasting powers were going to prove sufficient to carry it through eternity nobody knew or cared; but for four weeks, at any rate, the regret prophesied by Brother Billow had racked the soul of every Miltonian who had failed to be present on the last night of the great revival. Even the regular loafers in Foley's saloon had not escaped. They, too, were in the grip of the common sorrow. For it was at the very last one of that series of meetings that Dave Whittam had made his confession.

The Foleyites were especially sore over the matter. In their case insult, somehow, seemed to have been added to injury, and Bill Pugsley expressed the general sentiment when he grumbled out:

"If Dave had a confession up his sleeve he'd ought to 've given us the first look at it instead of takin' it over to old Billow's gospel shop."

"Anyhow," put in Ed Plummer, "he might have tipped us the wink to come over."

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"P'raps," suggested Jim Wragley, "he didn't know himself he was a-goin' to do it."

"P'raps so," admitted Bill, as if he recognized that the subject was somewhat out of his line.

"I guess that was it," said Plummer. "This here remorse seems to be like cramps when you're swimmin'. It takes you sudden."

He spoke serenely, as a man who could never have occasion for personal dealings with remorse.

"Well, it's liable to pull Dave under, if what I hear's true," remarked Wragley.

"What's that?" demanded the chorus.

"Why, my kid was a-tellin' at supper to-night that old man Smathers went to see the sheriff this mornin' an' made him write out to Coloraydo, to the sheriff of Silvereen county, an' tell him the hull thing."

"Humph!"

The group looked thoughtful.

"He always was a sanctimonious old snake, old man Smathers was;" remarked Pugsley with some show of feeling.

"What do you guess the sheriff out there'll do about it?" asked Plummer.

"Well, if what Dave told last night was true —"

"True!" exclaimed Pugsley. "Dave Whittam ain't the man to lay claim to a murder that he never committed!"

It was, in fact, no less a thing than a murder to which the new convert had confessed. The others who had been "convicted of sin" and risen to testify had accused themselves in general terms of being miserable sinners, but they had not gone into specific details. It was different with Dave Whittam.

He did not clearly remember how he had happened to straggle into the first of the meetings. They were held in Britt's Hall and he had a vague recollection of finding the lighted stairway very inviting one cold evening when he had stumbled out of Foley's saloon at a rather early hour for him.

The promise of the stairway had been fulfilled, for the hall was as warm as a pack of people and uncommonly hot shot from the revivalist could make it. Dave had rendered tribute by slumber-

ing peacefully in a corner of the back seat until the very close of the meeting. He had no mind to move even then, but let the giggling boys who had shared the seat with him go stumbling out, with as much noise as they conveniently could make, over his outstretched legs.

It was the new Y. M. C. A. secretary who, after standing over Dave with knitted brows for a few minutes, finally shook him to his feet, half carried him down-stairs and piloted him, not to the mean back room in a cheap boarding-house which Dave called "home," but to a bath-tub at the club rooms. Here Dave wrestled with a needle spray and the muscular young secretary until he had achieved both soberness and cleanliness — at least, he had had them thrust upon him.

But the struggle did not end there. Day after day Dave wrestled with the secretary, not always physically, as on that first night, though they sometimes came even to that. Most of the time, however, the contest was one of mind and of soul. Day after day Dave pitted his will and his passion against the purpose of the secretary, and night after night he struck his colors and went unresistingly to Britt's Hall.

After that first night, however, he did not sleep in meeting. He listened now with an interest which the secretary, seated beside him, covertly but keenly watched. For Brother Billow Dave had little regard; but the evangelist repeatedly scored with him, and a longing steadily grew in Dave's poor old heart for that peace of which he was hearing so much.

He said nothing about it, though — not even to the secretary. He always had been a man of few words. His very cronies never dreamed how long his feelings smouldered before they burst into open passion.

It was Plummer who once said of him: "Dave's like a powder kag. He's too explosive to be popular in society."

In reality, Dave's feelings needed persistent fanning to make them flare into speech and action, but when they did burst out, it was Dave alone who knew of their long smouldering. Everybody else was amazed at what seemed his sudden violence.

So it was that even the secretary, who had wrestled all through the week with him, shared the general astonishment when, on the

last night of the revival, Dave got up and made his confession. True to his character, he did not waste words.

"Perhaps some of you don't know me," he said. "I'm Dave Whittam. For the last four years I've done teamin' for Mr. Clapp by day and drinkin' at Pat Foley's by night. That was up till a week ago. Since then I've been with Mr. Pemberton here day *an'* night."

He hesitated a moment and seemed to be prompting himself by a careful examination of the palm of his right hand. Then he lifted his head stubbornly.

"I've heard a lot here about peace," he said. "Most of you say you've got it and you say you got it by confessin' your sins an' repentin' of 'em. If repentin' would do it I'd 'a' had peace long ago, for I've repented as bitter as any man ever did. An' yet I ain't had peace — no, not for the last ten years. Except when I was drunk," he added, with a wry twist of his dry lips.

The hall was breathlessly still, except for the sudden bang of a bench on the floor, as the young men who had climbed upon it at the rear of the crowd momentarily unbalanced it. The noise seemed to rouse Dave out of a reverie.

"No," he repeated, speaking in a louder and sharper tone. "I ain't known peace for ten years. If confession'll give it to me, then I'm ready to confess. I ain't had peace, an' the reason is that I've got murder on my conscience."

There was a quick rustling hiss as the crowd caught its breath.

"Yes," Dave went on, looking now straight into the eyes of the new secretary, "I killed a miner named Joe Ransom at Silvereen, Colorado, ten years ago the fourteenth of last December. He drove me to it, but he didn't know he was doin' it. He knew he was badgerin' me, but he never meant to rile me like he did. That's why I can't forgive myself."

Apparently Dave had a discriminating idea of justice. He sighed.

"Nobody suspected me," he went on, "an' as they couldn't agree in suspectin' anybody else, I didn't feel called on to say anything. I stayed around there somethin' over a year afterward, but I got to drinkin' an' finally I pulled up an' come back to Illinois. I thought I'd be all right here." He paused again and

returned to the inspection of his right hand. "But I ain't," he went on, almost defiantly, "Those of you that know me can testify to that." He gave another wry travesty of a smile. "It ain't much better, if any, here than it was there. I've gone on drinkin' and gone on thinkin'. This week I've let the drinkin' alone, thanks to Mr. Pemberton, but I've thought harder than ever an' I've made up my mind that if peace is to be got I want to get it."

He looked around rather vaguely a minute, then added, "I guess that's all," and sat down.

That was Dave Whittam's confession, the confession which had been a four weeks' wonder in Milton, which had caused the Foleyites to regret, for once at least, their lack of interest in revivals, and which had sent old man Smathers on a morning hunt for the sheriff who, though he showed his visitor scant courtesy, could yet see no way of refusing the demand made upon him.

To the feverish curiosity which burned in the breast of Miltonians of all classes it seemed as if the sheriff of Silvereen took his time about replying to his Illinois confrere. At the end of a week of silence, old man Smathers openly expressed his opinion that the Milton sheriff had evaded his duty and failed to write at all.

"However," concluded Mr. Smathers, compressing his thin lips, "that shall scarcely avail him anything. In the interests of law and order I will myself write to Silvereen this very afternoon."

But that afternoon came the second sensation in the Whittam affair. It arrived in an unofficial-looking envelope addressed to the Milton sheriff and, while it was brief, it was, as every one agreed, decidedly to the point. It read:

SILVEREEN, COLORADO, February 25.

TO THE SHERIFF OF MILTON COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

Dear Sir:—The account of the murder of one Joe Ransom, as given in your letter of the 18th inst., was correct. Whether your party, Whittam, committed it, he knows and nobody else does. If he's so sure of it and is so damned sorry as he says he is, I would respectfully suggest that he go out and hang *himself*. This county has not got any money to spend on ten-year-old murder cases. We have got too many that are strictly up to date.

Respectfully,

ALBERT STONE,
Sheriff of Silvereen Co., Col.

The community in general, and the Foleyites in particular, were by no means ill-pleased with the manner in which the Colorado sheriff grappled with the Whittam affair. Dave, in his quiet way, was giving them proof of the sincerity of his repentance and the reality of his desire for the peace of honest living, and everybody seemed to wish him well. Nowadays, when he had put up his team and cleaned up himself, he would go over to the clubrooms and let the young secretary teach him to box. Or, grim and silent, would pull at the rowing machine until the perspiration rolled down his face and he really wanted the lemonade, always ready in a big bowl on the table.

The Foleyites scarcely understood their own attitude, which was one of somewhat vague but nevertheless genuine pride in their quondam crony. Under ordinary circumstances it is much to be feared that they would have devoted themselves to greasing the way for Dave's backsliding. But the confession made things different. As a matter of fact, they really had a much better time talking about Dave as an eccentricity than they could have had talking to him in the old familiar capacity. So it was small sacrifice to them to leave him alone save for a curious "Well, Dave, how you makin' it?" whenever they met him.

Nobody appeared to take seriously the Colorado man's recommendation of an auto-hanging. Even Brother Billow was too proud of this brand, so miraculously plucked from the burning, to care much about the letter of the law. The minister was really a kindly man at heart, anyway, and by no means yearned to see his fellow-beings in torment, though his gusto upon certain occasions may have been somewhat misleading on this point.

There was, however, one man who gave his almost undivided attention to that portion of the Silvereen communication which advised Dave to attend to his own punishment. Old man Smathers' jaw had dropped when he first heard of the contents of the letter, but it wasn't long before the thin lips recovered themselves and shut with a snap. He said little beyond a few rather labored remarks, bristling with Scriptural quotations, about the proofs of a sincere repentance.

If people had been inclined to listen with interest to old man Smathers they might have gathered that he thought that Dave

ought to be doing something about that murder. But he was not exactly a popular person, and now, as always when he talked, people heard little and cared less, which, it may be added, did not make any particular difference to the old man.

He was not a nice old man, but he thought he was. To Bill Pugsley he was a sanctimonious snake, but to himself he was a man of inflexible piety and an unselfish devotion to seeing that other people did what he thought they ought to do. The more angrily people resented this interference in their affairs, the more conscientiously he interfered, and the more unctuously he rehearsed at prayer-meeting his willingness to suffer in the performance of his duty.

But old man Smathers was mistaken about himself, and Bill Pugsley was right. He was a sanctimonious snake. His inflexible piety was narrow bigotry; his ideas of what other people ought to do never for a moment embraced the notion of their doing anything pleasant. He really was willing to suffer rebuffs and contempt, but it was because he got an exquisite pleasure out of nagging and tormenting the human soul. In his own way, he was incredibly cruel. He delighted in filling the mind of a new convert with doubts — though this he called "making them to search their carnal hearts that they may cast out therefrom the last vestige of evil." He loved to chide a minister for "the weakness of laxity," which generally meant that the pastor had shown tender mercy and loving kindness to an erring member. Simultaneously he would lick his thin lips with avid joy over the picture, drawn in black phrases, which he held up before that erring member at every possible opportunity, portraying the unhappy man's state of sin.

It was one of his peculiarities that he did all these things secretly. In this he had a hundred texts to support him. At least, he would have had them if he had been called upon to explain his conduct. But the texts were *ex post facto*. The secrecy was born and bred in the man. It was what shut his thin lips with a snap after he had recovered from the Silvereen sheriff's flippant suggestion. It was what kept him comparatively silent on this point except when he was alone with Dave.

That happened oftener, during the month following the revival,

than could have been accounted for in the ordinary course of Milton affairs. At first, it was about every other day that Dave cringed under the old man's lash. But when a week, ten days, had gone by without results, the "chance meetings" thickened. Dave would have driven around a quarter-section, not to mention a town block, to avoid an encounter with old man Smathers; but, in the first place, a heavy load cannot be whisked airily this way and that at will; and in the second place, the old man had a way of starting almost out of the very earth, like an accusing fury, at the sound of Dave's wheels.

A drunkard in the act of reforming is not, as a rule, conspicuous for the steadiness of his nerves, and Dave was no more of a miracle than the next man. Even his team knew that something was up. "Damn it!" muttered Dave one day as, standing in his empty wagon, he tried to take a corner, bumped into the curbstone and almost lost his footing. "Damn it!" for his tongue had not altogether lost its cunning. "I used to drive better when I was drunk!"

Dave was hanging on to the ragged edge of the mantle of morality and sometimes the shreds came off in his hands. Then he would take a fresh grip — also a tablet out of a bottle which the young secretary had given him — and continue to hang grimly on.

But old man Smathers hung on, too. Dave sometimes wondered at himself for not telling the secretary about it, but he always concluded by gritting his teeth and hating — hating — hating his enemy. It would have been much better to have told the secretary. Sometimes that persistent young person had a feeling that Dave wasn't getting on as well as he should. He wondered about it, and then he wondered at himself for wondering. Dave was not his first drunkard and, with the drawn, set, haggard face before him, he finally ended with a sigh which was a prayer. He thought he knew the only demons which were giving Dave his tussle and, though he had seen them worsted in tougher fights than this ought to be, he knew that Dave had his hands full. Of old man Smathers as a factor in the case he never even dreamed.

The old man was an enthusiast in his way. He had a complacent idea that he was of the stuff of which martyrs are made.

But that was another mistake on his part. He was indeed somewhat closely associated, in his make-up, with the martyr period, but the lip-licking tigers were more akin to him than their victims were. Out of the stuff of which he was made an earlier generation had manufactured inquisitors.

Still he was an enthusiast. He even occasionally lay in wait at night for the sole pleasure of walking home with Dave from the Y. M. C. A. clubrooms. Sometimes the secretary could not sleep for the look in Dave's eyes when he said "Good-night." Yet Dave continued to say nothing but "Good-night." Nothing more than that to the secretary and but little more to his tormentor. It was really small wonder that old man Smathers thought him a poor-spirited creature.

The fourth week following Dave's confession had been got through somehow. Perhaps Dave and his team alone knew what a tussle it had been, with the lines shaking and twitching in his hands like reeds in a flood. Still it had gone somehow and it was Sunday night, marking a month since Dave's beginning of his quest for peace. It seemed to him that he was as far as ever from finding it. At first, he had grasped it, but it seemed to have slipped through his fingers. Rather, old man Smathers had torn it from him, bit by bit. He hated him! Hated, — hated — he checked himself. That was not the "right spirit." During the past month he had heard a good deal about the right spirit, but to-night he was too tired to fight with himself. He certainly was tired. Good God! was anybody ever as used up as he was!

With long, lean forefinger, Brother Billow shook the close of his sermon over the pulpit at the congregation and, wiping his forehead, announced the closing hymn:

"Hymn 436," he said, "hymn 436."

When he read he pronounced the first "a" very long and very much through his nose. The rest of the line came out in little explosions.

"Ay — charge to keep I have,
Ay — God to glorify,
Ay — never dying — soul to save
And — fit-it-for-the-sky."

"Omit, if you please, the third stanza; the third stanza. Let all rise and join in the singing. 'Ay — charge to keep I have.'

At the close of the service I'll ask the elders to remain for a few moments to consult —— "

The rest being somehow lost under the pulpit, the organist began the hymn and everybody rose.

"Are you going to stay?" Dave asked the secretary as they stood up together.

"I suppose I must," he answered reluctantly. He gave his protégé a side glance and saw the hunted look that lurked in the hollow eyes. "But I wanted to see you to-night," he went on.

"May I just step 'round to the rooms and wait for you?"

"Yes, or wait here. I won't be more than a few minutes."

"No; I want a bit of air. I'll get out now and go over there to wait."

"All right. I'll be there inside of fifteen minutes."

Dave was so new an accession to the ranks of the church-goers that he was not, as yet, very well up in such esoteric knowledge as the names of the officers. Somehow it never occurred to him that old man Smathers was not one of those whose presence had been requested by Brother Billow.

He hadn't a qualm on that score, therefore, when he struck off on a side street at the first opportunity and escaped from the homeward-bound congregation. He wanted to exercise violently for a while. He wanted to double up his fists and strike at the air. He was tired — yes. But he wanted to be tired enough to drop asleep in utter exhaustion.

He wanted — he wanted — He groaned and stopped, his head in his hands. He knew what he wanted. There had been a spasm of virtue, however, on the part of the town authorities and the saloons were closed tight these Sundays. Dave felt that it was a lucky thing for him. He laughed with a sneer at himself.

"Eh-heh! How's the peace getting along, Brother Whittam?" said a coldly deliberate voice behind him.

Every nerve in Dave's body which was not already on edge rose in a quiver at that voice. Every muscle knotted. Dave did not take his hands from his face, but unconsciously he hooked his clenched fingers over his teeth and dragged at his set jaw.

"The wicked crieth vainly in his heart for peace, and there is no peace for him," the deliberate tones went on. "What manner

of man is that who, having sinned, wants peace? Peace, by way of punishment! O-o-o-h, what a fine punishment for the sinner! Of course, of course. By all means. Let a man lie and steal and — " he hissed in Dave's ear, "kill his fellow-man and damn the poor creature's soul to everlasting hell, and then say, 'Now I'll have my punishment! A little peace, if you please; a lit-tle — pleasant — peace.' "

With a cry that was a snarl Dave whirled around and struck blindly with his clenched fist. His eyes had been shut so tight that, opening them upon the darkness, he could not see what he struck at. He barely saw it fall. But the crack with which the head struck the board walk was like the crack of doom to Dave's ears.

For a moment he stood tense, on guard, waiting for it to get up — but there wasn't a movement. There was only a low groan. He stooped and stared at the upturned face, with its dreadful, half-open eyes. It was not the first time in his life that he had thus stooped to look at such a face. A sudden horror of himself shook him. With groping fingers he tried to force his way between the overcoat buttons to find what the heart was doing. His own heart seemed to have crawled off into some corner of his being and to be hiding there, motionless, paralyzed. Suddenly he stood up and, with apparent calmness, thought the thing out.

He would not go home. Ten chances to one, Mr. Pemberton, not finding him at the clubrooms, would hunt for him at his boarding place. He looked again at the dim bulk outstretched at his feet, at the glimmer of white where the ghastly face framed the dreadful eyes, then turned with a shiver and walked quietly toward the outskirts of the town. On the way, he wistfully fingered a revolver in his pocket. He had put it there in case he should ever find himself getting over a drunk. But this was different. He had never dreamed of this. He had, as has been noticed, a discriminating idea of justice and he told himself that he had no right to die so decent a death now. A pistol was too good for him. He untied his cravat when he had found a spot which seemed to him "as good a place as any" and, in the morning, they found him there, half sitting down, hanging by only a few inches from a branch of a little tree.

Old man Smathers they had found hours before and, as he apparently had a skull which matched his heart for hardness, he was not much the worse for the experience. The doctor soon pulled him through the effects of "a slight concussion of the brain, caused by falling on a frosty sidewalk." With a shrewd smile on his thin lips, the old man listened to references of this sort, but he said nothing. He opened his lips only enough to lick them as he thought of what was going to happen when he should be out again.

Before that time came, however, he yielded to the temptation to ask a question or two, a sudden fear having come to him that the bird might have flown. It was Brother Billow to whom he appealed.

"How is Brother Whittam getting on these days?" he asked.

"B-brother — Whittam!" stammered the minister, taken aback. "You haven't heard — that — "

He stopped short. He had been warned that the patient was not to be excited. But the patient was already excited. He raised himself on his elbow.

"Heard what?" he demanded.

"There, there! Nothing in particular," replied Brother Billow, soothingly, his regard for absolute truth being lost to sight in this tight pinch.

"But," insisted the patient, "I want to know."

"Why — he — " looking about in distress for help which refused to appear.

"He what?"

"There — there — he — we — Mr. Whittam died the Sunday night you were hurt."

Brother Billow flattered himself that, under the circumstances, he was doing fairly well.

"Died!" gasped the patient, sinking back on his pillow. He seemed unable to grasp the fact. "Died!" he repeated, and his thin lips worked painfully. "Died!" he murmured again and then his eyes lighted up. "How did he die?" he demanded.

Again Brother Billow searched the room for relief.

"How did he die?"

The patient certainly was getting excited.